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141

MORRISON

JIMENEZ

LANNING

NEW X-MEN®

MURDER AT THE MANSION 3 OF 3

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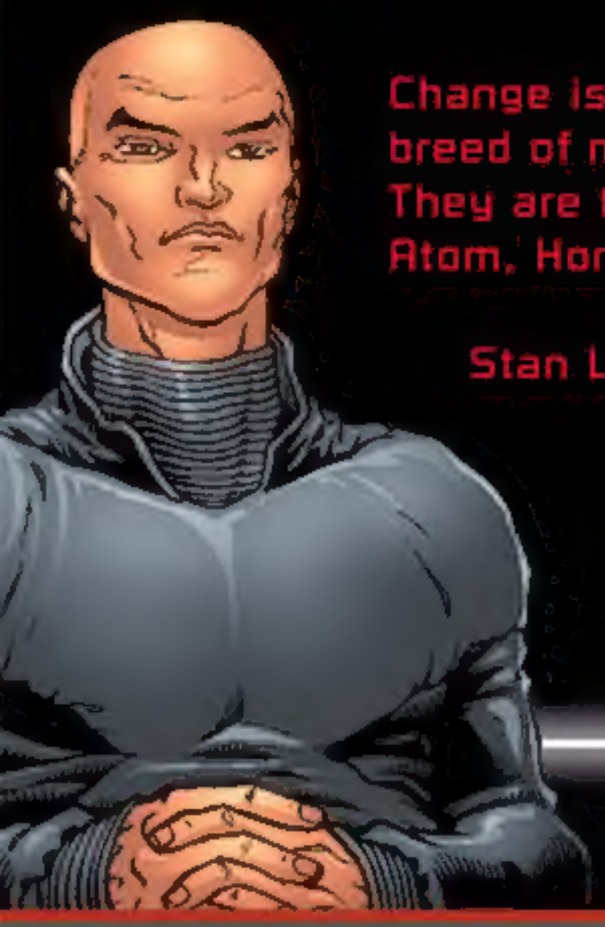


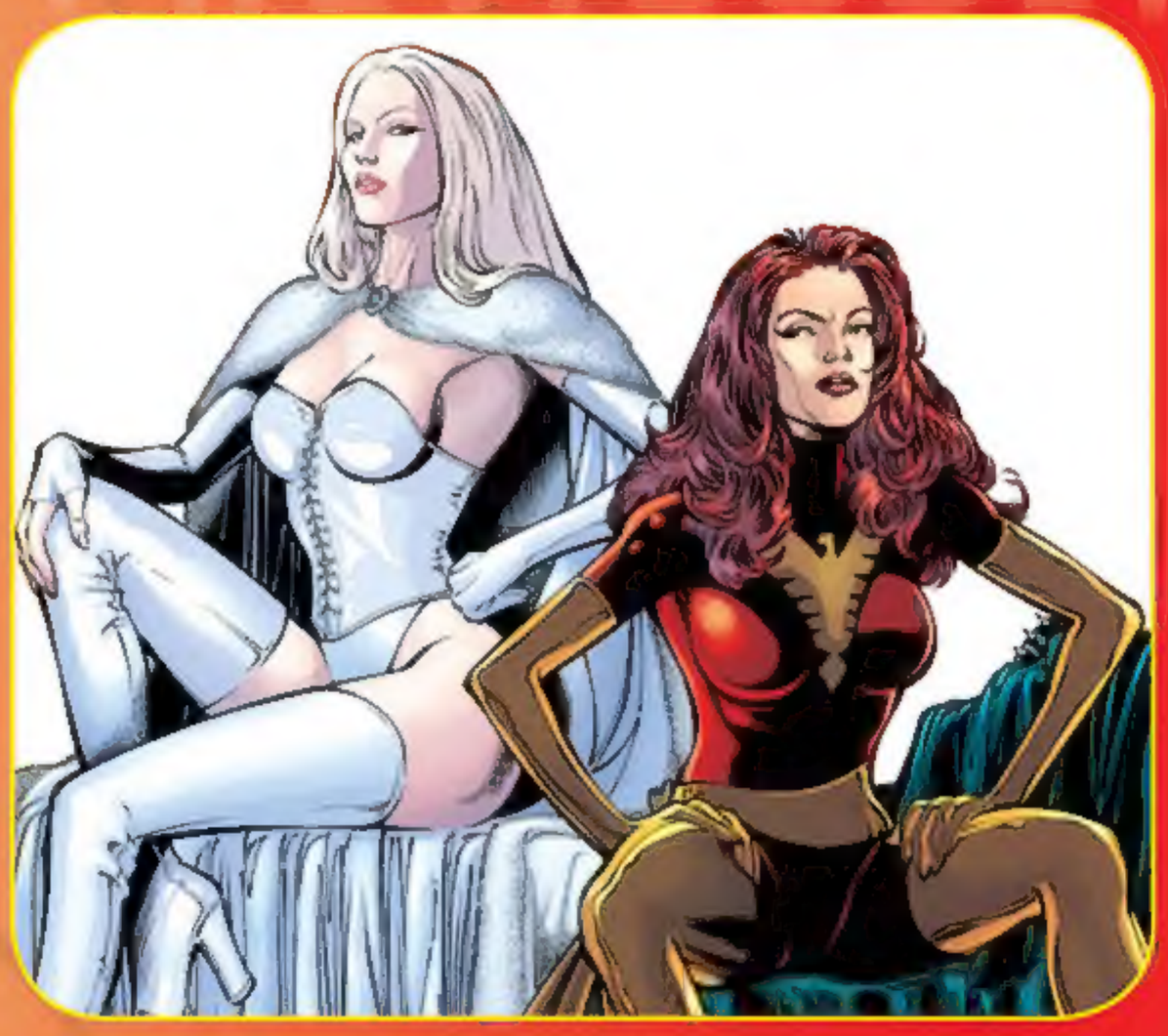
Change is coming. A new breed of man has emerged. They are the Children of the Atom. Homo superior.

Stan Lee presents...

NEW X-MEN®

MURDER AT THE MANSION 3 OF 3
"WHODUNIT?"

PREVIOUSLY



THE X-MEN are a worldwide team of mutant volunteer workers gifted with new evolutionary talents. They are a rescue and emergency force on the frontline of the genetic battlefield of the 21st Century. Founded and financed by the brilliant telepath PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER, the X-Men are forever sworn to protect a world that hates and fears them.

But at the XAVIER INSTITUTE — X-Men headquarters and a school founded to teach young mutants how to use their powers responsibly – not everything is as it should be. The last several weeks have seen the school in an unsettling state of disarray, due in large part to several key factors: an in-house "riot" instigated by one of Xavier's very own pupils; the growing use of a new power-enhancing drug called "Kick"; the revelation of Scott Summers and Emma Frost's "psychic" affair; and now, worst of all, a lethal threat from within. While in her diamond form, it appears as though Emma Frost has been shot, and now lies shattered in a million crystal pieces on the floor of Xavier's school.

Enter mutant detectives BISHOP and SAGE, on loan from their adventures with the X-Treme X-Men team. With Bishop's invaluable police work experience and Sage's near computer-like brain, this detecting duo have uncovered a most unsettling discovery regarding the Xavier Institute and the death of Emma Frost ... Emma's death was an inside job.

BISHOP
Energy Blasts

SAGE
Computer Mind

EMMA FROST
Telepath, Diamond Skin

JEAN GREY
Telepath

BEAST
Super Strength, Agility

XORN
Healer

ANGEL
Wings, Flight

BEAK
Wings, Flight

STEPFORD CUCKOOS
Telepathic Collective

PROFESSOR X
Telepath

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⊗THE XAVIER INSTITUTE FOR HIGHER LEARNING...

SAGE!

The sun in a box!

The sun in a box!

SAGE!

Me a pony... *ngggghhh*...stop that shouting...sh-sh-*shouting!*

Horse and trap.

Sage, what happened?

It's me, Lucas *Bishop.*

Send me a p-p-postcard, boyo.

Talk sense to me, Sage!

Make it oily.

Where's that acupressure point you have?

There.

Reboot.

UNNK!

Nnhuu

Bishop?

You okay?

What the hell happened?

I'm fine. Fine.

I seem to have lost some *files*...somebody *did* something to me and wiped gigabytes of data from my brain.

Where?

What did you find?

There was a *shack*...

...there.

Bishop... I...

...I can't *remember* anything from the last hour.

Great.

How long before you can perform a full data retrieval?

"Alive", you said.

It smells like...*biology*. Like the smell you get in tidal pools by the sea.

We shouldn't have come here, Bishop.

There's something *rotten* at the Xavier School.

Riots, drugs, telepathic adultery, *murder*...

What *are* these things?

My guess? *Eggs* of some kind.

I wouldn't get too close, Bishop.

No, maybe you're right.

Let's get back to the Institute... I want *Professor X* and the X-Men to know about this.

Why is it anytime *Emma Frost* gets mixed up in our lives, there's always trouble and confusion?

She can't even keep her *death* simple.

Everyone has to get involved in Emma's latest drama, whether they like it or not.

You *hated* her, I get the picture.

But we're here to investigate her *murder* and that's what we'll do until we crack it.

No, I didn't like her *one bit*, and I don't like *this*.

We can't risk any kind of contamination by staying with these things.

Have you *found* something?

Yes.

We definitely have to involve *Professor Xavier*.

INSIDE THE MANSION...

...go on, Barnell.

You were telling me how you *shot* Miss Frost.

Are you *sure* about this, Barnell?

Your story doesn't sound convincing in the *slightest*.

I don't know what to say, Dr. McCoy!

My head is *crazy* with this!

Barnell...I don't *have* to be a telepath to know you're *lying*.

Why don't you tell us who you're *protecting*?

Angel shot Miss Frost, didn't she?

No, it was *me*, Professor! I was *mad* and *I* did it!

I didn't want anyone to know I have made Angel *pregnant* with *monster babies!*

Wait a minute.

Angel is *pregnant?*

Was.

She is half-girl, half-*fly*... how was I to know there is a life cycle of, like, only *five days* between the sex and the birth?!

She said you would *throw us out* if we didn't hide the babies...she said Miss Frost would *tell*, so...so I shot the teacher dead so no one could know...

They are like monsters in bags of hanging *skin* and it's all my fault!

Barnell...why would we think of throwing you out?

Whatever you've done, you're one of our most valued students.

Who *told* Angel these terrible things?

I don't know...

...maybe it was Miss Frost, maybe someone else...she said we would be *expelled* if you found out.

I am *valued*?

Angel told *Emma* she was pregnant?

So where's Angel now?

I don't know!

There has been *nothing* of her since the mutant policeman *Bishop* guy was asking all the questions yesterday!

And now for me it is all just *too much!*

All too much *life!*

Too much *reality!*

Sage and Bishop are on their way up, Professor.

I have to get back to Emma's body...if there's still a chance.

So?

The murder weapon, Beast.

Custom-engineered by experts to fire a *diamond* bullet capable of *shattering* Emma Frost in her mineral form.

You checked for fingerprints...?

AAAUUWWW

This is *so bad.*

It's okay, Barnell.

We found a shack in the woods behind the Institute.

There's some kind of *life forms* in there and Sage was attacked.

You musn't go there!

This is what I'm saying!

This shack... *Wolverine* built one a few years ago, *recovering* up there after one of his lost winters.

Maybe *Angel* was the one who attacked me, protecting her larvae?

What is this word "*larvae*"?

Who is to say these babies are *insects* or *medical curiosities*?

We have no idea *what* kind of offspring could emerge from two X-gene-positive parents with radically altered reproductive physiology.

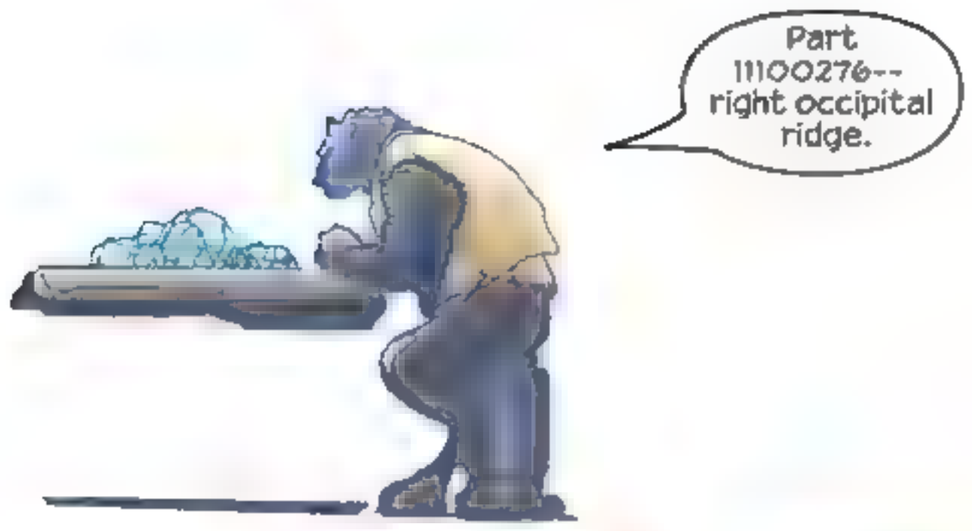
Mutations can be benign or malignant, but it's hard to tell without actually *seeing* what's happening.

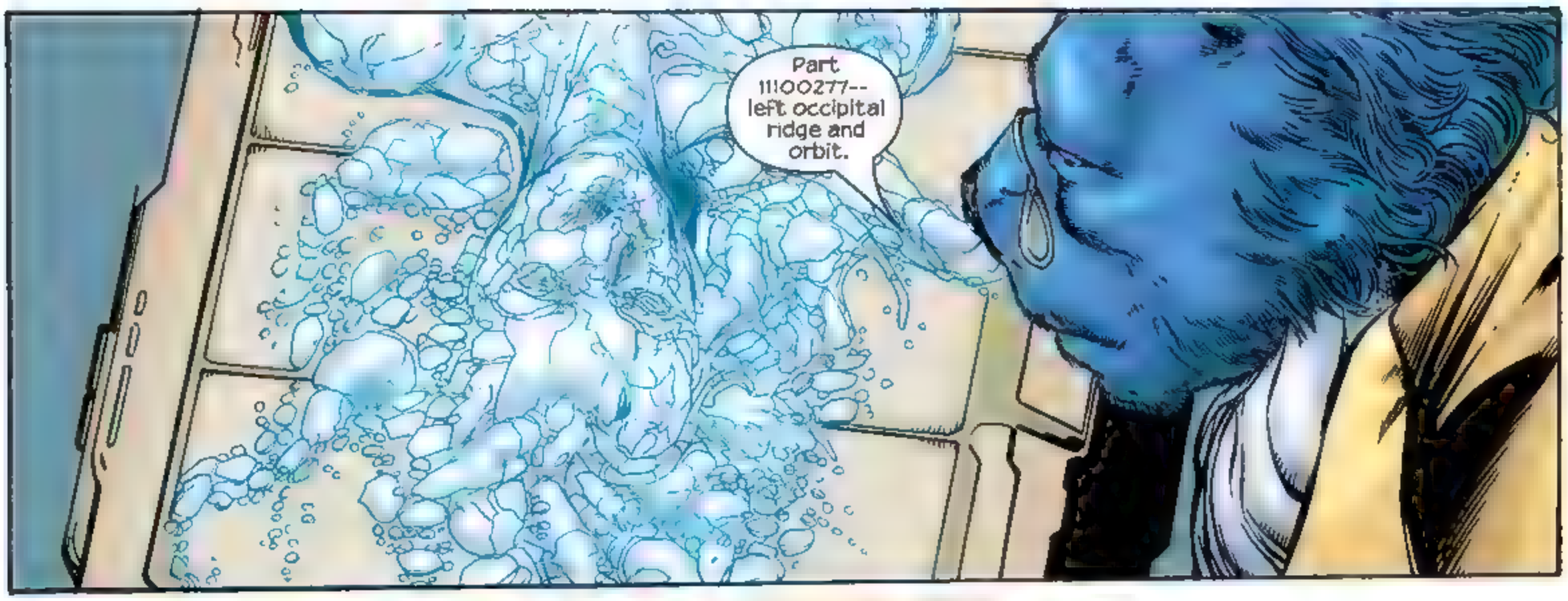
Enough talk.

Follow me.

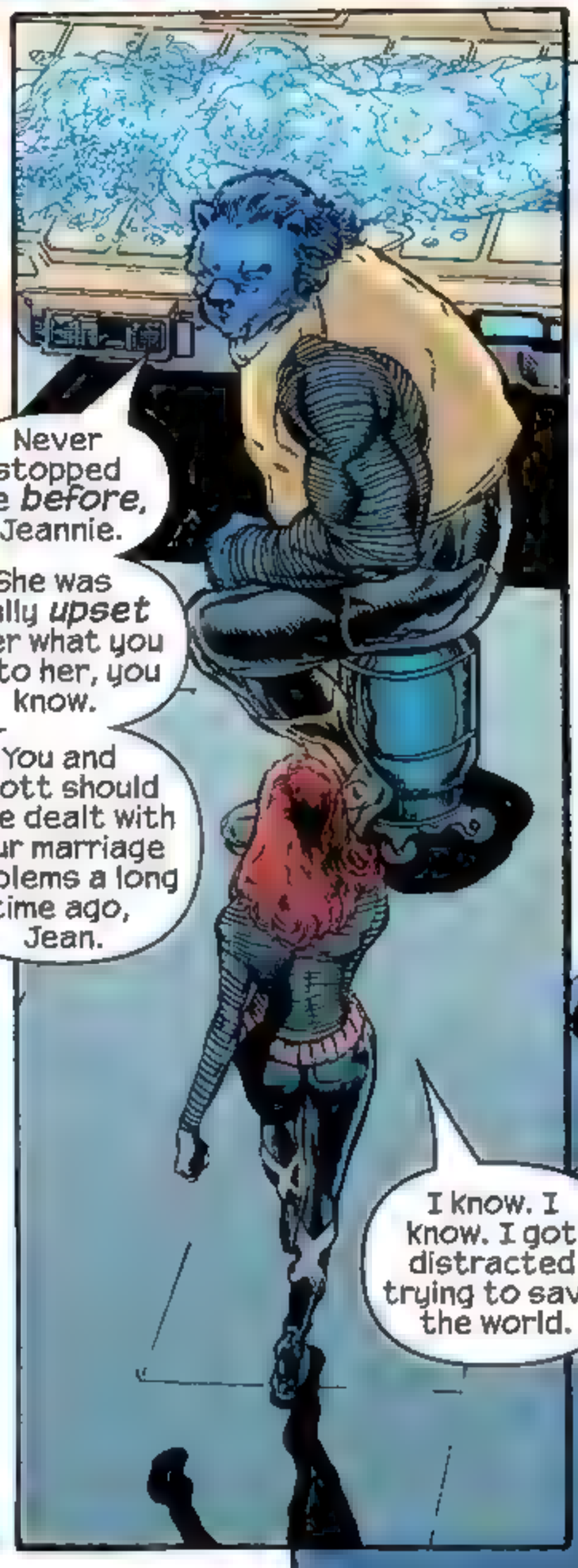
We're taking a walk in the woods.

⊗LATER...


Part 11100276-- right occipital ridge.


Part 11100277-- left occipital ridge and orbit.

Hank?
What you're trying to do is *impossible.*


Never stopped me *before,* Jeannie.
She was really *upset* after what you did to her, you know.
You and Scott should have dealt with your marriage problems a long time ago, Jean.
I know. I know. I got distracted trying to save the world.
Here, I found *this...*

HRRRM

I've been hunting all *over* for these.

I bet everyone thinks it's *me*, don't they? The way Sage just *stares*, with her computer brain clicking away behind those cyber-sunglasses...

Well, I was watching *"Orfeo"*.

Emma's girls can vouch for my dubious attempts to recreate the lead tenor in the restaurant afterwards.

Those girls are highly skilled *telepaths*, Hank. Trained by one of the most devious, Machiavellian women I've ever met.

I know what I *saw*.

So now *you* think I killed Emma, too?

Don't be *ridiculous*, Hank. *Nobody* suspects you. I'm just saying the Cuckoos could make you see anything they *wanted*.

You could have been sitting in a back alley listening to *cats* mating...

Wait a second...Emma's consciousness is still clinging here.

Hank, I read the theater manager's *memory*.

The scheduled performance of *"Orfeo"* was cancelled that night because of a bomb scare.

OUTSIDE...

Angel and Beak are *not* killers, Charles.

I *know* these children and trust in their goodness.

Sometimes even the best people will do *terrible things* to protect their secrets, Mister Xorn.

But I'm in full agreement with *you*.

Agree all you like...Angel had the *murder weapon* here and was probably using it to defend her *brood*...

Hatched now by the look of this.

Brood's a loaded word, Sage.

But get behind me...

...just in case?

Don't shoot!

Don't.

The bags burst, but it's *okay* now.

Check 'em out!

In my dreams I would see an army of *monsters*, all shouting *"Father"*... but look at *these*...

I'm gonna call 'em after the *Jackson family*.

Yeah.

This little freak looks about as cute and useless as *you*, Beakie.

I have told them I was the one who shot Miss Frost to protect our *secret*. I was ready to take the blame, but they are all too *smart* and nobody will believe me...

Oh, but look at the wingspan of this guy.

The *gun*, Angel.

We *know* Barnell had nothing to do with this.

No, you're *right*. It *was* me.

I took that gun and I shot Miss Frost in the face.

I had to because she found out about something but I don't know what.

Fingerprint analysis of the weapon confirms that.

Angel did it.

No, wait.

You held the gun...but you didn't pull the *trigger*, did you, Angel? Not *really*.

THE MANSION...

Esme!

You can't just walk *away* like this.

I can do what I *like.*

I've called a taxi telepathically.

I'm going to dye my hair and scrawl my name across the world.

So you can all *shut up.*

All of you.

MEANWHILE...

Jean?

I know everybody's *worried* about me, Hank.

Yes?

Everybody thinks the *Phoenix Force* is turning me into some kind of *cosmic destroyer*, but it's not *like* that.

I have trouble with the *rushes*, but I'm okay, really.

I think I can *make things right* here.

This isn't the first time Emma's been *disembodied*.

So I'm thinking I could maybe *fuse* the diamond molecules together telekinetically.

Maybe I'm over-reaching...

Can you think of a pink door opening, Hank? Thanks.

Okay.

I'm reading all those medical textbooks from your *memory*.

I wouldn't want to put her heart in the *wrong place*.

She *loves* him, Hank. Emma has actually fallen *in love* with my husband.

It's almost funny.

OWW!

Wake up, Emma.

Scott *needs* you.

Wake up.

ESME!

OUTSIDE...

In a *hurry*, Esme?

I'm surprised a smart girl like you forgot about the *curfew*.

No one in, no one out till we're *done*.

Remember?

I've waited here long *enough*. Summer will be *over* by the time you track down Miss Frost's murderer!

If you can't solve the crime, it's your *own* fault, not *mine*.

We *did* solve the crime...it wasn't all that difficult.

We know who shot Emma Frost... we're not entirely sure *why*, but we know *who*.

Angel was *remote-controlled*, wasn't she?

You used the drug *Kick* to boost your telepathic powers... then you overwhelmed the group mind of the Cuckoos and when Sophie *resisted* the takeover bid you *steered* her towards death...

Why?

Miss Frost spoke very *highly* of you.

No she didn't... she only loved *herself!* Why does everybody always take *her* side?

Miss Frost wanted us all to be like *her*, and I'm *nothing* like her! Nothing at *all!*

That doesn't seem to me like a good enough reason to want to *kill* her.

There's someone *else* behind all this, isn't there? Someone *bigger.*

Who are you *meeting,* Esme?

Oh, if only you *knew,* Mister Bishop.

But don't worry...

...you'll all find out *soon enough.*

LIKK! In my head...Sage, get her...

You! Computer brain.

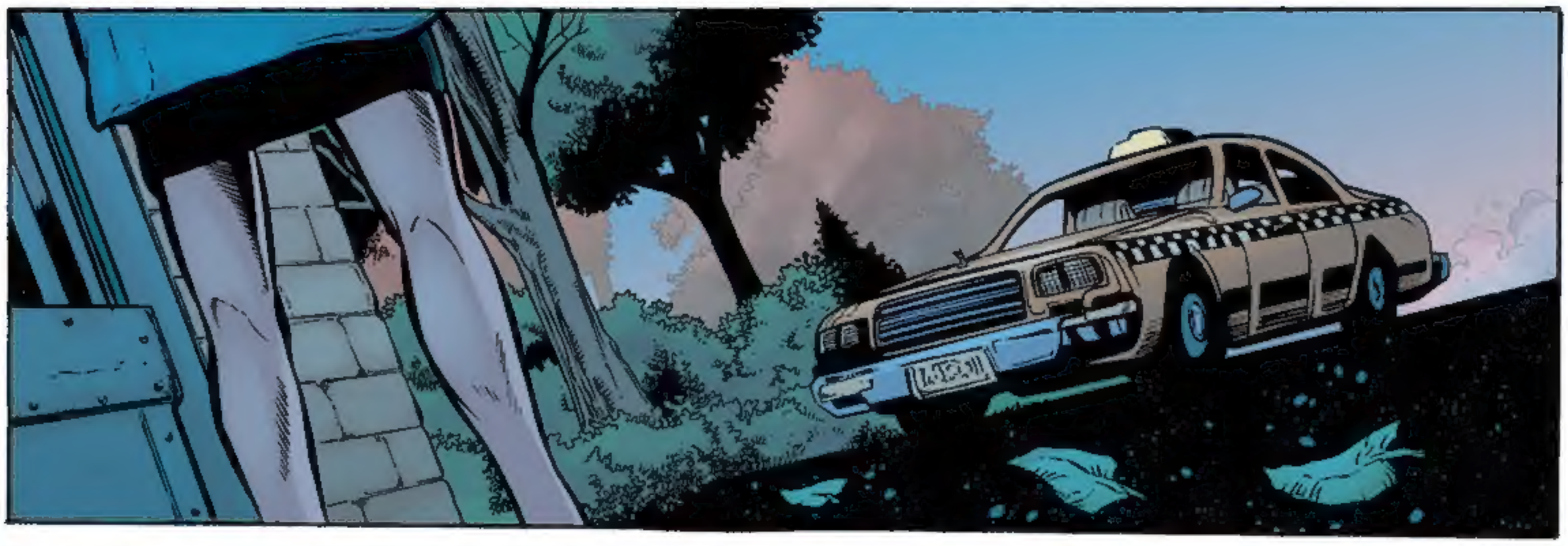
HH Emergency shutdown.

BUTT

Keep doing that until I'm gone.

Perhaps we'll meet again in the *new world* that's coming, but I *doubt* it.

XAVIER



Snap out of it, Lucas. I'm *not* your father, and you're not in any *trouble.*

UNN

What did she *do* to me?

Feels like I relived the worst day of my childhood.

You *okay,* Sage?

That kid's like a barracuda!

Yes... no. Excuse me, Bishop, the memories are *returning* from my hard drive.

Esme's psychic attack seems to have *loosened* something.

There! I can smell the pines...sweat and male pheromones.

The gun is pressed against my fifth vertebra.

The angle of the muzzle would make my assailant at *least* six feet two, possibly taller.

It wasn't Beak *or* Angel...

...there's someone *else.*

Figures.

Now where the hell is *Scott Summers?*

NEXT: ASSAULT ON WEAPON PLUS!